

THE C's OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

To change and find “the new cheese,” an organization has to first know itself, its people, and its unique culture. Time has aptly demonstrated that automation tools such as personal computers and e-mail do not create a paperless office, much less a useful base of knowledge. The Program Executive Office for Standard Army Management Information Systems (PEO, STAMIS) has tackled these problems by establishing Adapa. Named after the Babylonian god of knowledge and based on a foundation of modern state-of-the-art Oracle9iAS portal and database technology, Adapa is the result of PEO, STAMIS forming an elite and efficient government/contractor team to revolutionize its internal operations. This will be achieved by providing a completely Web-based ready access to data, building a variety of portal-based applications to support internal operations, and implementing various automated workflows of business processes.

As founding principles for Adapa, PEO, STAMIS developed the “C’s” of Knowledge Management as high-level guidelines. These portal system design, implementation, and management guidelines must be considered prior to a portal implementation. The remainder of this article provides a discussion of each of these guidelines.

C: Drive

Data on an individual’s C: drive is the enemy of knowledge management. Individual data retention denies the organization specific data and gives that person a power base of unique knowledge. No organization can function year after year with data kept on personal and individual computers. Eliminating data on the C: drive must be an initial and primary component of knowledge management. Similarly, server drives do not provide the structure for sharing because files can be named by anyone and placed anywhere on the server. To facilitate open sharing of data, a directory and structure must be pre-established. This allows a library-type system where data can be readily stored, accessed, and searched. A powerful search feature assists users to find contents.

Content

Content is king. A knowledge management system that has minimal content is worthless. A set of rich organizational content is essential. Management of the content requires it to be relevant to each community of users. To facilitate this, activities within the organization must be responsible for their own content. This also eliminates the need for a single webmaster to post all data, which is often a bottleneck. Portal technology that allows authorized

people to post data and content rapidly facilitates growth of the system.

Commitment

A knowledge management system is an investment. It is much richer than an organizational Web page, which can be relatively static. Organizationally, a knowledge management system requires a team of dedicated technical and process-skilled individuals to manage and continuously extend the portal. All levels of an organization must be committed to the portal because the investment will continue year after year.

Culture

A portal inherently changes how people do their everyday work. To some, this can be seen as an intrusion. Certainly, direct policy on portal use assists in the migration to the portal, as would technological changes like closing server files down. An easier benefit is to effect culture change slowly and make everyone an owner of the system. This can be done by placing value-added features on the portal, such as links to local traffic reports (a must when working in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area), or reprioritizing portal development when a certain user group desires a unique feature.

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Conspiracy

Care must be taken to avoid the "Big Brother" syndrome. Unconstrained and unmanaged, a knowledge management system can become threatening. Workers in the organization need to see the portal as a tool and not as a replacement for their work or as a way to micromanage them. The portal is a tool for individuals to show their value to the organization. Authorship and individual contribution can be highlighted and recognized in a portal.

Capital

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Certainty

No one wants to pick up today's newspaper expecting current headlines and then realize they are reading news that is 4 months old. Even

worse is if the person expecting current news does not recognize that the news is outdated and uses that information as if it were current. The same principle applies to a knowledge management system. Maintaining absolute accuracy of data in the system is of paramount importance. Date tags, time-limited data, and purposely expiring data are technical methods to establish timely data. Portal technology now allows the portal itself to be the workspace, rather than just a place to post data or documents developed elsewhere. This method ensures that key data are always timely because there is only one place for the work to be done.

Commonality

Technology options today are vast; there are dozens of standards, hundreds of vendors, thousands of products, and millions of separate permutations of this landscape. Accompanying this is the ever-changing nature of the products, with version changes, patches, etc. If many different products are assembled into a functioning knowledge

management system, one future product change may interfere with the smooth operation of a portal if the change is not backward-compatible with other components. If a vendor goes out of business, the future of the system can also be jeopardized. The portal development staff must be focused on extending portal functionality. While technology will change, the technical staff shouldn't constantly be chasing integration issues as products change. If upfront care is exercised to minimize technology components, integration issues will be kept to a minimum.

Summary

Adapa is much more than a simple Web site of documents and links. It provides powerful applications that reside on a database that archives acquisition knowledge and technical information. Expansion is key to the system as new content and functionality is added every week. By implementing a highly secure roles-based environment, Adapa also provides secure access for PEO, STAMIS personnel anywhere in the world. The PEO, STAMIS' Adapa will grow from a place where people go to see their work, to a place where people go to do their work. Adapa seeks to capture that which is individually intangible, but collectively invaluable.

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